132 of high water, part of the narrow plains bordering the river are inundated.

133 At the pass of Bamako the cliffs on the left bank are close to the river and hem in the city. The pass is marked by the appearance of rapids (Sotuba, Kénié), for the river meets for the first time the [20] sandstone it cuts through. The water is highest at Bamako around September 22 and begins to subside towards October 15. It is lowest around April and May.

137 The vegetation is quite unvaried. Species of great forest trees are found in the ravines of the mountains to the south; the small Sudanese forest covers the whole Niger region up to Bamako where the layer of laterite is thin. It is a forest of deciduous trees; the trees shed their leaves, and flower in the middle of the dry season while they are still bare; then the leaves appear before the return of rainy season which marks the awakening of the herbaceous plants. Let us note particularly the karite [shea] tree (Butyrospermum Parkii) which is the most widespread and characteristic of the Sudan; the nérê (Parkia biglobosa); the téli (Erythrophloeum guineense); the lingué (Afzelia africana); the caïlcedrat (Khaya senegalensis), as well as enormous gramineous plants of the Andropogon family which are more abundant in the humid depressions than on the plateaus.

[134] However, large areas covered with a layer of laterite are bare except for some scanty gramineous plants: this is the "bowal." These immense iron flats, barren of humanity, make excellent hunting

136 grounds. Buffaloes, panthers, Derby's elans, various kinds of monkeys, elephants, antelopes, lions, wart hogs, hippopotamuses, and crocodiles live there. The glossine (tsetse fly) abounds in the same region.

241 Between these immense, desolate bowals grow rice, millet, and fonio (Digitaria exilis), the most wretched of the world's cereals and the most important for ritual purposes.

133 In the valleys, outside of the beds of laterite gravel, one finds the small forest or cultivation in newly cleared places and prairies are found in the sections that are annually inundated.

B. The Ségou Basin

This is a plain framed by the sandstone of the Manding and Dogon plateaus, by the Goundam range and the range south of the Dehar near Bassi Kounou.

2. Taboos

614 825 784 The Bambara people are divided into several families or lineages each of which bears a special name, or diamou, and sees at its head /16/ certain plants or animals as protectors and patrons. The Djara lineage claims kinship with the lion, the kana, or iguana (1), the

[136]

1. A kind of large lizard resembling a small alligator. It lives on river banks and near ponds, and though it prefers the land and climbs trees, it likes to play in the water. The French commonly call it gueule tapée /"smart jaw"/.

boumou, or dondol; the Dambélé with a large black monkey called Ngoba; the Tankara with a spiney silk-cotton tree, the dondol; the Kouloubali with the wild pig /biche cochon?/, the Mpolio (2), and

2. A slimy and spined fish.

the panther. There is not a lineage that does not have one or even several tné, or taboos. As will be seen below, lineages of the same name often regard themselves as bound by a tie of fraternity and friendship, while a difference in the tné shows, that a division occurred at some particular time.

Europeans, churchmen, military men, and civilians, usually call the Bambara tné "totems." Since Long, the one to speak first of "totemism" and "totems," this question has been treated at length by serious and distinguished authors, by competent authorities. Their definitions cannot be applied to the Bambara tné. Striking as is the resemblance of some of them to the totems of the Redskins and the Australians, I cannot apply to them the definition given by Nicolay in speaking of the Redskins: "The Redskins also believe in the existence of spirits peculiar to individuals (as fetishes are to Africans) and which, in animal form, bear the names of totems." (3) The